

Companion Paws Testing Guidelines



Prior to being admitted to the CPC evaluation, a brief temperament test will be performed on the dog by the CPC evaluator.

The CPC Test is divided into two stages and has 17 individual tests and additional exercises within each test. The temperament evaluation is not included in this number.

The CPC Test reflects realistic situations and should be helpful in evaluating the potential therapy dog.

The CPC Test requires 15 feet between each station.

To qualify as a therapy dog, the dog must have no aggression towards people or other dogs (including un-neutered male dogs). The dog must be friendly, gentle and loving.

The dog must have basic therapy obedience training completed and be fully house broken prior to the evaluation.

Furthermore, everyone at Companion Paws is a dog lover. As such, we only qualify dogs who enjoy interacting with strangers to protect dogs who don't from being over-stressed or forced into such activities.

During testing, there will be people and dogs standing inside the testing area. Kids will be included in one or more of the individual tests.

Testing Requirements Summary:

- Accepting a Friendly Stranger
- Sitting Politely for Petting
- Out for a Walk (Walking on a close leash)
- Walking Through a Crowd
- Sit and Down on Command (Staying in one place)
- Coming When Called
- Reaction to Another Dog
- Reactions to Distractions x 2
- Reaction to Medical Equipment x 2
- Leave It x 2
- Supervised Separation (time - one minute)
- Say Hello
- No Mark Manners
- Appearance and Grooming

A Brief Summary of the Formal Evaluation

The dog must be on a fixed-length (no more than six feet) leather, nylon, or fabric leash. Retractable leashes are not allowed. The dog will wear a leather, nylon, or fabric collar with a metal buckle or plastic quick-snap closure or harness. Halters, slip collars, metal collars, choke chains and special training collars (e.g. "pinch", "spike", prong, electric, or spray collars) are not allowed during the evaluation.

The trainer can use verbal and/or hand signals to communicate with the dog. This is not an obedience competition; therefore, the handler is encouraged to talk to the dog during the entire evaluation. In addition, the trainer can bring the dog's own comb for the grooming exercise.

Remember, the handler is the dog's advocate. If at any point during the evaluation, the handler feels that the exercise is too stressful for the dog, the handler should let the evaluator(s) know. The handler may withdraw from the evaluation at any time.

Handlers are not allowed to give the dog any treat during the entire evaluation. Furthermore, the trainer may not physically force the dog to perform an action during the evaluation.

What constitutes a pass/fail is often a judgment call and will be at the discretion of the experienced evaluators from CPC. After the evaluation, the evaluator(s) will be happy to discuss the results with the handler and answer any questions.

Note: During the evaluation, the handler can talk to the dog at any time but treats are not allowed. The dog will be on leash with the handler at all times except during a test.

The team will fail if the dog (or handler) displays any sign of aggression or extreme stress.

- 1) Greeting the Infirm:
the dog will greet a stranger in a wheelchair etc. It should not be shy of or resent the interaction or petting
- 2) All-Over Body Touch:
the dog will be touched all over its body. Small dogs will need to sit on the lap of each evaluation assistant.
- 3) Restraining Interactions:
includes tight hugging, gentle ear-pulling, gentle tail-pulling, and gentle leg-pulling
- 4) Clumsy petting:
includes on the head as well as the body. The evaluation with children also includes finger poking.
- 5) Awkward movements:
includes awkward arm-swinging and walking
- 6) Bumping from behind:
the dog will be bumped gently from behind while walking with its handler
- 7) Yelling and other loud noises:
includes arguments between 2 evaluation assistants and dropping of an object in front of the dog to create a loud noise
- 8) Crowded Petting:
the dog will be petted simultaneously by multiple evaluation assistants

Often, handlers find that the dogs can pass all the required tests at home but fail to perform at the evaluation facility. This is not surprising since a dog can behave very differently in a new environment. The presence of new smells, healthcare equipment, strangers, and other dogs will easily distract the dog.

To qualify as a Companion Paws therapy dog, the dog must pass all the required tests while being evaluated, in both the pre-assessment workshops and final evaluations, with others in a new environment by a CPC evaluator. This is to simulate the situations the dog will (or may) run into.

Waiting Period

The handler and dog must arrive at least 30 minutes before the evaluation starts. At any time, any Companion Paws volunteer/assistant may interact with or observe the dog. If the dog displays any aggression or releases itself inside the evaluation facility, the team will fail the evaluation immediately.

ADDITIONAL RULES FOR TESTING

1. Greyhounds are not required to sit for testing

RATINGS

All evaluator decisions are final.

PASS: The handler/dog team has qualified to register for the Companion Paws evaluation

NOT READY: The handler/dog team assessed as "Not Ready" may participate in future tests.

Any of the following behaviors may result in a rating of "Not Ready":

- Dogs sniffing excessively, so as to interfere with appropriate walking on a leash
- Handlers who use force or an excessively loud voice in an attempt to control the dog
- Dogs exhibiting excessive shyness
- Dogs barking or vocalizing excessively
- Dogs urinating or defecating during testing
- Dogs charging ahead of the handler going through the door

FEEDBACK TO PARTICIPANTS

As an evaluator, you are expected to provide each participant with positive and constructive feedback regardless if they pass or are rated "Not Ready". Statements could be as simple as saying, "Congratulations! Your dog passed all 17 tests". In cases where a dog is rated as "Not Ready", all comments and feedback should be positive. For example, an evaluator may say, "Your dog did a great job. She passed all tests except Number 7. She could learn to "come" in a few lessons. I hope that you will work on this and bring her back."

Feedback should be given to each participant immediately following the completion of the test so that each can be recognized individually, or given further encouragement. We discourage having participants sit and wait.

TIMING

On average, 5 to 8 dogs per hour can be evaluated. Evaluators need to balance time between running an efficient test and spending enough time with each participant so as to make the test a worthwhile and educational experience.

UNRULY BEHAVIOR

Any dog that displays unruly behavior at any time is to be automatically disqualified and immediately removed from the test area. Unruly behavior is defined as aggression, growling, or lunging at people and/or dogs, biting or attempting to bite and fighting. A dog that has been disqualified may be re-tested at a later date.

Usually a dog jumping on people or other dogs will be rated "Not Ready". However, since some handlers invite their dogs to jump on them as a reward and sign of affection, the evaluator may accept a dog jumping on the handler if it is felt that the dog's behavior is under control.

DISQUALIFICATION

- A dog that displays unruly behavior at any time will be immediately disqualified and removed from the test area. Unruly behavior is defined as aggression, growling, or lunging at people and/or dogs, biting or attempting to bite and fighting. A dog that has been disqualified can be re-tested at a later date.
- Handlers who shout or mishandle their dogs will be cautioned that such conduct is not acceptable and will not earn certification if such handling continues.
- Handlers of dogs, which receive a "Not Ready" rating, will be encouraged to continue working with their dogs and given tips on how to improve the dog's performance.
- Heavy collar pressure or jerking on the leash or collar to maintain control is not acceptable and will be rated as "Not Ready".
- Neither food nor toys or other training aids may be offered or carried during testing. A treat after the test has been completed is acceptable.
- Dogs are rated as "Pass" or "Not Ready".
- The LifeLine Canada Foundation issues a Companion Paws vest, identification card and certificate for dogs rated "Passed" in the evaluation.
- A dog's skills diminish without practice. It is important for owners to continue to work with the dog long after the test date has passed, not only to maintain peak performance, but for the satisfaction of both owner and dog.

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

- Three to 5 assistants will be required to assist in performing registration and testing, including a handler with a well-behaved dog and an individual to hold the dog for Test 12 (Supervised isolation).
- Handlers, their dogs and friends or family members attending with the handler, are encouraged to be assistants during the evaluations.
- To create a "crowd" for (Walking through a crowd), several by-standers or assistants will be required.

- Approximately one half hour before the scheduled start time, the Evaluator should walk the test site in order to ensure the area is satisfactory and is a safe environment. At this time, any volunteer assistants will be assigned their responsibilities.

The handler is required to bring the following equipment to the test:

- A leash not less than .75 meters (2') nor longer than 2 meters (6') in length is required. (Acceptable collars include a well-fitting slip, buckle or martingale collar, made of fabric, leather or chain. Harnesses are allowed. All other types of collars are unacceptable.)
- A grooming tool -- either a brush or comb
- A plastic bag for picking up after the dog

A dog should be tested wearing its normal walking equipment, such as a well-fitting slip, buckle, or martingale collar, made of nylon/fabric, leather or chain. Specialized training devices such as pinch collars and head halters are not acceptable for the test.

REQUIRED TEST MATERIALS

The Evaluator is responsible for providing the following test materials:

- Evaluation forms
- Pens
- Spare grooming tools
- Distraction items
- Clipboards
- Water/bowls for dogs
- Plastic bags (large & small)
- Paper towels
- Wheel chair
- Crutches
- Small orange cones/pylons
- Paper plates for food
- 2 kinds of human food (ie: popcorn and hotdogs)